

Socialism and the Negro.

By C. L. Woods,

I had no desire to enter into a controversy with Sergeant Gibson, and when I saw that he had replied with so much spirit, I was very much surprised. He tells us that I gargled his language. In reply I appeal to the readers of The Colored American to compare my article with his. I intended to be fair, and I still believe I was. He insinuates that I give lynching countenance by silence. In reply I again appeal to the reader to say if I have not in different articles spoken out against injustice and oppression in different forms. He wants to know if I have ever raised my voice against Negro disfranchisement. Poor stupid fellow, why don't he know that the very article to which he was then replying denounced disfranchisement in the strongest possible language? And I have spoken in public also against the colored man's wrongs. He says he is loyal. So am I. He says he loves law and order. So do I. He says he was a soldier in the Spanish War. So was I. He says his regiment saved the white forces from annihilation. The white race appreciates their valor, and so do I. When I was a soldier, I tried to do my duty. And when we mingled with the colored people, and anyone showed race prejudice, I always spoke in their defence.

And although I was not born until after the Civil war, nearly half a score of my people rallied to the call of our martyred Lincoln, to save the Union and to free the black man's neck from the yoke of bondage. And on many a red field or tiresome march they proved their devotion to Liberty and Union. And I would think I were entitled to a little better treatment at the hands of those I would help, than to have my efforts called "Treason," "rot" etc., and to call my party a "beast." Especially is this ungenerous in view of the fact that the Socialistic party (the "beast") is the only party that contends for the rights of the colored man. I spoke to father about my former article and Sergeant Gibson's reply and he said, "If you approach a viper you will get bit, no matter how good your intentions are." But I am of the opinion that the only trouble with the sergeant is that his stripes have swelled his head a trifle and that when he gets older and learns more, he will develop into a very fair sort of a man. In fact I do believe that he would not speak as he does if he knew more about our doctrines. But be that as it may, there are millions of downtrodden ones among both the whites and the blacks, who are looking for deliverance from industrial bondage. And to them I speak. And to them I want to say that Socialism and Anarchy have nothing in common. We contend for a purer and better government in which there will be no very rich, for the reason that the industries will not be in private hands as they are now. They cannot then rob the laborer. Nor will there be any very poor, and each man will receive and equivalent for all he produces. We believe in equality and justice between man and man, and we denounce the disfranchisement of the colored man. We believe in law and order and in national convention denounce all forms of lawlessness and give special attention to the injustice done the colored man. We believe in equality, and demand the same rights for the Negro that we demand the same

rights for the Negro that we demand for ourselves. We believe in righteous men and go to the Bible to vindicate our cause.

We believe that God is no respecter of persons, and if He is not, the air and the water and the sunshine and the land are for all the people and not for the part, and that no man has any right to charge any one for the use of the land, any more than he has for the sunshine or the air. For the land is just as much the gift of God to all the people as is the sunshine or the air. In that connection we observe that millions of the colored people are compelled to give all they can raise above a bare living, to landlords for the privilege of living upon the land. We socialists contend that the government must own the land, and operate it, and give each worker an equivalent of all he produces. When that is done many small farms will be thrown into few large ones. Better machinery can then be used, and a given amount of labor will produce at least five times as much as it does now. To illustrate: on a small farm here, wheat can be raised at a cost of perhaps thirty cents a bushel, while in the West on the great "Bonanza Farms" they attach twenty-four ten-inch plows, six ceeders and six barrows behind a great engine, plow, harrow and plant a strip of ground twenty feet wide every time they cross the field. Two men do the work while the third hauls fuel and water. And with other heavy machinery they cut and thresh the crop. Thus they raise grain at a cost of only three and a half cents a bushel. Now, under Socialism, that kind of machinery will be in use everywhere. And with wheat at that price flour can be sold at fifteen cents a hundred, without any reduction in any man's wages. Wouldn't that be a benefit to the Negro? Again, we claim that the government can manufacture and sell for at least one-fifth of what private firms charge. In evidence. A buggy can be made and all materials furnished at a cost of only twelve dollars. But when it has gone through the hands of so many middlemen, each of which is compelled to pay rent or interest and to advertise, it costs us sixty. Now the government will not be compelled to advertise, for it will have no competition, and if it owns the houses and the lands it will not be compelled to pay rent, and it will sell us the same buggy for thirteen or fourteen dollars.

Again, the railroads can afford to carry both passengers and freight for one-tenth of what they now charge. Under socialism you could travel from Washington to Chicago for one dollar. I refer you to 13th Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor to verify all of these statements.

We claim that the telegraph system can be run by the government, as a part of the postal system to a great advantage to the people. I went into a telegraph office to telegraph some money to a distant town. They wanted to charge me a dollar and a half. I objected and going into the post office registered it in a letter and sent it at a cost of only ten cents. It takes more actual labor to carry the letter than it does to send the message. Yet the private corporation charges fifteen times as much as does the government. Why not then take the telegraph systems under government control?

Thus we might continue, but the subject is exhaustless and space is limited. But I have endeavored to show something of what Socialism teaches and of its benefit to the Negro, and I ask the reader in all candor if there is any treason or anarchy in anything that I have said. But the sergeant asks, "What is Socialism?" Webster tells us that it is the theory of a better order of society. And Encyclopedia Britannica says, "The ethics of Socialism are identical with the ethics of Christianity." "But what is Socialism?" It is law; it is order. It is co-operation. Do you believe in our postal system? That is socialistic. Do you believe in public schools? That is socialistic. Do you believe in the police force? Do you believe in the courts? These are socialistic. Do you believe in fire companies for our cities? They are socialistic. Do you believe in public roads? Do you favor free libraries? Do you advocate municipal ownership of electric lighting plants, or water works? These are socialistic. Do you believe in extending the functions of government to embrace every industry so far as it could be for the public good? Do you believe in good common sense and honor and order and economy and system in industrial affairs, and in equal opportunity to get on in the world, and in equal rights before the law, and in peace and prosperity and plenty? THIS IS SOCIALISM.

Now a word in conclusion. Winter is near. Soon, the biting frosts will strip the forests, and drive the feathered warblers to a sunnier clime. The earth will become bare and cold and then a mantle of whiteness will envelope the face of Nature. Icy blasts will drive the well-to-do into their fur coat and fleecy gloves, or cause them to seek comfort between thick walls about the glowing furnaces or stoves. But the poor! Mothers will die for exposure, children will perish for want of proper food. Some will beg, some will steal and cry bitterly. Some will curse and blaspheme, and become hardened in sin. While yet others will forget their chastity to furnish food for their little children or for little brother or sister. Men will seek for work and seek in vain for there is not work for all. And failing to find it will become desperate, hard and vicious, and eventually will become anarchists, criminals or suicides. This has been the program every winter for the last twenty-five years, and it must become worse in the years to come. And I would respectfully ask Sergeant Gibson if he has any remedy for these terrible conditions. Washington, Iowa. CHAS. L. WOODS

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In another part of this issue of The Colored American is found the advertisement of Messrs. M. Tregor and Co., at 1329 E Street, Northwest. This firm is one of the oldest and most reliable in the District of Columbia and its advertisement that appears in to-day's issue of The Colored American is only one feature of perhaps a thousand that have brought business to the concern.

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